

These poems appear in *The Bowling was Superfine: West Indian Writing and West Indian Cricket*, published by Peepal Tree Press. [www.peepaltreepress.com](http://www.peepaltreepress.com)

**KWAME DAWES**

**ALADO SEANADRA**

Something like forty runs to pile up in fifteen overs  
with the sun round like power over the compound.  
I prayed like hell out there on the boundary

far from the scorers talking Test cricket as if this game  
was another day in the sun. I prayed like hell.  
I had made something like twenty – out to a stupid short ball

which should have been dispatched to mid-wicket with ease.  
But too greedy, I got a top edge,  
and was caught looking naked as a fool in the blazing

midmorning. Now, like a mockery, the bowling was soup  
but the boys still struggling to put one single before a next.  
So I prayed like hell out there on the boundary, trying to will

a flaming red four my way. Still, I should have known,  
after all, God's dilemma: We playing a Catholic team  
that always prayed before each game. And where their chapel

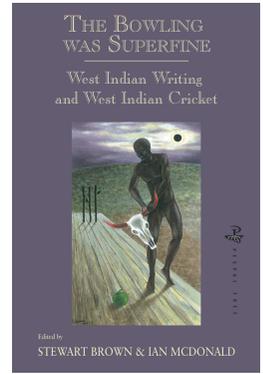
was a shrine, ours, well sometimes goats get away  
inside there; and once we did a play right there using the altar  
as a stage. So I tried making deals with the Almighty,

taking out a next mortgage on my soul; asking him to  
strengthen the loins of Washy who looking alone in the wilderness  
out there in the blaze, bedlamized by the googly

turning on the rough patch outside off-stump.  
Washy went playing at air, and the wickets kept falling  
until it was Alado, flamboyant with his windmill stretch action,

his fancy afro and smile, strutting out to the wicket  
still dizzy with the success of his bowling that morning.  
And Alado take his guard loud, loud to the umpire:

“Middle and leg, please.” Lean back till his spine crack.  
Alado, slow like sugar, put on the tips, prolonging the agony.  
Now, Alado surveyin' the field, from boundary to



boundary as if somebody was about to move a stone,  
and the boys start to wonder if this was some  
secret weapon, some special plan to win the match

in a trickifying way. I fantasised a miracle  
in that moment, but I blame the sun for that.  
And then the boy take his stance. Classic poise, bat tapping,

looking like a test class stroke-player, toes shuffling,  
waiting for the pace bowler sprinting stallion along the worn  
dry grass. Up to the wicket, he bowls, good length ball,

dead on mid and off. Alado shift the front foot forward,  
sheer poise and style, head down according to the Boycott book,  
elbow up, and unleash a full cover drive,

bat like flying fish catching the sun. And even when we heard  
the clunk of the stumps, and see the bails take off,  
we all still searching the extra cover boundary

to see the ball slap the boards. Alado Test stay posed off  
like that for Lord knows how long. Big smile in his eyes  
staring at the ball he must have hit in his dreams.

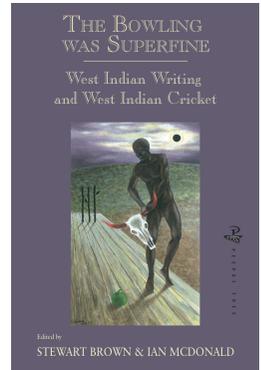
The umpire signal end of play with the gathering of the bails  
and the pulling of the stumps. My soul was saved that day,  
the year we never made the finals.

This poem originally appeared in *Progeny of Air* (Leeds: Peepal  
Tree, 1994)

EDWARD BAUGH

VIEW FROM THE GEORGE HEADLEY STAND, SABINA

“You see, you see what I tell you,  
he playing and missing, I tell you!”  
“No, no, you don’t read the stroke.  
He know what he doing, he leaving  
the ball alone. Just at the last  
crucial moment, he easing the bat  
inside the line and letting it pass.”  
“Well, all I can say is that that  
is a damn dangerous way  
to be leaving the ball alone.”  
“What you saying in truth? You mean  
you meaning to tell me in this  
almost-twenty-first century them white boys  
making my boy look fool?” “Mister man,  
all I know is it wrecking my nerves,  
for just make that ball swerve  
a fraction and follow the bat  
and bap is a snick to slips  
and, ole massa, we gone, we dead!”  
“Cho, I don’t care what you call it,  
that is what I call a indigenous  
stroke. You know what I know?  
This argument can’t settle, for if  
him out now caught in the slips  
that still wouldn’t prove nutt’n  
and if you ask him himself, the man  
would be a fool to tell you the truth.”  
“Gentlemen, gentlemen, is watch  
we come to watch cricket, or is  
epistemology we come here to talk?  
This chicken sweet, yes? Is Brenda  
cook it? Say what? You mad?  
You don’t know long time that rum  
don’t agree with my stomach?  
Man, just pass me the Scotch.”



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